

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 DODE-00 IGA-02 ACDA-05 AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00

L-03 EUR-12 MC-02 /070 W

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P R 081425Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6778

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGUI 0429

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI PFOR XA

SUBJECT: REGIONAL ARMS RESTRAINT STUDY

REF: STATE 20621

1. MISSION STAFF DELAYED SUBMISSION OF THIS REPORT PENDING MY ARRIVAL. I HAVE REVIEWED IT AND CONCUR IN ITS CONCLUSIONS.

2. ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBLE CAR INTEREST IN REGIONAL ARMS RESTRAINT MUST TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION SALIENT FACT THAT THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC IS HEADED BY A CAREER MILITARY OFFICER, LIFE PRESIDENT AND MARSHAL JEAN-BEDEL BOKASSA. ALTHOUGH CAR SPENDS MORE THAN TEN PERCENT OF ITS BUDGET ON DEFENSE, AND HAS MORE THAN 6,000 OF ITS 1.8 MILLION INHABITANTS IN UNIFORM, THE TRADITIONAL CAR MILITARY ROLE IS NOT SO MUCH THE DETERRENCE OF FOREIGN INCURSIONS AS THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNAL ORDER AND THE UNDERTAKING OF PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS. ALTHOUGH IT STILL HAS A PRE-INDEPENDENCE MUTUAL SECURITY UNDERSTANDING WITH THE FORMER COLONIAL POWER, FRANCE, THE CAR NOW LOOKS PRINCIPALLY TO THE SOVIET UNION FOR ITS MILITARY ARMS AND ADVISERS. THIS HAS NOT YET,  
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HOWEVER, ENABLED THE USSR TO EXERCISE SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE

ON CAR POLICIES. BOKASSA REMAINS FIRMLY OPPOSED TO COMMUNISM AND, AS A RESULT OF ANGOLA, HE HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT SOVIET INROADS IN AFRICA. BECAUSE OF HIS ANTI-COMMUNIST, PRO-WESTERN POSTURE, HOWEVER, BOKASSA IS VULNERABLE TO LEFTIST EXPLOITATION AND COULD

BECOME A TARGET FOR COMMUNIST SUBVERSION. HIS ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT DEFENSE OF THE CAR ALSO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION. THE FACT THAT THE CAR IS SURROUNDED BY FIVE COUNTRIES, ALL OF WHICH HAVE RECENT HISTORY OF INTERNAL DISSIDENCE: CHAD, SUDAN, CONGO, CAMEROON AND ZAIRE, TWO OF THESE, CONGO AND CHAD, HAVE LEFTISH GOVERNMENTS.

3. OVERALL, BOKASSA DOES NOT FEAR EXTERNAL THREAT FROM HIS NEIGHBORS AND CONSEQUENTLY IS UNDER LITTLE PRESSURE TO ACQUIRE MAJOR WEAPONS SYSTEMS FOR THIS PURPOSE. HOWEVER, COLLAPSE OF ANGOLA, HIS FEAR OF COMMUNISTS SUBVERSION AND CONCERN FOR HIS OWN PERSONAL SAFETY AFTER FEBRUARY 3 COUP ATTEMPT MAY LEAD HIM TO SEEK IMPROVED INTERNAL SECURITY CAPABILITY. ARMS RESTRAINT FOR WEAPONS PREVIOUSLY USABLE FOR SUCH PURPOSE WILL NOT COMMEND ITSELF TO HIM. HE MIGHT, HOWEVER, BE WILLING TO BE A PARTY TO AN AGREEMENT WHICH WOULD KEEP CERTAIN CATEGORIES OF SOPHISTICATED WEAPONRY OUT OF THE CAR AND NEIGHBORING STATES.

WHILE HE MIGHT ACCEPT EXTERNAL GUARANTEES, HE IS NOT LIKELY TO PUT MUCH FAITH IN THEM GIVEN HIS PERCEPTION OF WESTERN PERFORMANCE IN ANGOLA.

4. THERE ARE SEVERAL TRENDS WHICH MIGHT HELP PERSUADE THE CAR TO AGREE TO A REGIONAL ARMS RESTRAINT ARRANGEMENT. ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THESE IS THE UNFAVORABLE FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY SITUATION IN THE CAR. IN FY-75 THE GOCAR DESIGNATED FOR DEFENSE 11.7 PERCENT OF DOLS 7.8 MILLION OF ITS NATIONAL BUDGET. MORE THAN HALF OF THIS WENT INTO SALARIES; THE REMAINDER INTO RECURRING AND MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSES. IN FY-76 A MODEST INCREASE OF DOLS 150,000 IS FORESEEN IN THE DEFENSE BUDGET. WHILE SOME FUNDS COULD CONCEIVABLY BE DRAINED FROM INVESTMENT AND OTHER ACCOUNTS, THESE ARE NOT LARGE ENOUGH TO SUPPORT LARGE INCREASES IN

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WEAPONS PROCUREMENT. WITH ITS PRECARIOUS FINANCIAL SITUATION, THE GOCAR CANNOT, EVEN IF IT WISHED, DIVERT SUBSTANTIAL ADDITIONAL PORTIONS OF ITS EXTREMELY LIMITED RESOURCES TO FURTHER ARMS PROCUREMENT. INDEED, ONE OF THE REASONS THE SOVIET EMBASSY HAS BEEN IN BAD ODOR HERE OVER PAST FEW MONTHS WAS SOVIET AMBASSADOR'S ATTEMPT TO COLLECT CAR SHARE (ABOUT 35 PERCENT) OF COSTS OF SOME 100 MILITARY TRUCKS AND AN AN-26 SUPPLY PLANE. ADDED TO BUDGETARY/

FINANCIAL RESTRAINTS ARE BOKASSA'S RECENT POLICY STATEMENTS CALLING FOR AN END TO THE ARMS RACE IN AFRICA AND THE DIVERSION OF THESE FUNDS TO DIRECT ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE.

5. CONCLUSIONS: ALL OF THIS ADDS UP TO COMPLEX PICTURE WHOSE CONTOURS EMERGE ROUGHLY AS FOLLOWS. BECAUSE OF SOBERING ANGOLAN EXPERIENCE AND CLOSE TIES WITH MOBUTU WHICH DEVELOPED THEREFROM, BOKASSA CAN BE EXPECTED FOR TIME BEING AT LEAST TO FOLLOW MOBUTU'S LEAD IN SECURITY MATTERS. BOKASSA, WHO IS ONE OF MOST OUTSPOKEN AFRICAN CRITICS OF SOVIET POLICY, WOULD PROBABLY WELCOME ALMOST ANY AGREEMENT WHEREBY SOVIET MILITARY SUPPLIES TO CONGO, ANGOLA, CHAD AND OTHER NEARBY AFRICAN COUNTRIES MIGHT BE HALTED OR AT LEAST LIMITED. HE IS LESS LIKELY TO WELCOME LIMITS ON HIS OWN FREEDOM OF ACTION WHERE INTERNAL SECURITY IS AT STAKE. GIVEN HIS OWN SENSE OF INSECURITY, BOKASSA MIGHT SERIOUSLY CONSIDER SOME SORT OF US UMBRELLA ARRANGEMENT IF IT OFFERED AN EFFECTIVE COUNTER-BALANCE TO SOVIET INFLUENCE IN AFRICA. BECAUSE OF BOKASSA'S GENERALLY PRO-WESTERN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY HE WOULD PRESUMABLY NOT OPPOSE AND MIGHT EVEN WELCOME A US SPONSORED REGIONAL ARMS RESTRAINT ARRANGEMENT. HOWEVER, IN ACQUIESCING TO ANY SUCH ARRANGEMENT, HE WOULD HAVE TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION HIS SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH FRANCE AND ZAIRE. CREDIBLE, CAREFULLY COORDINATED AND EFFECTIVE GUARANTEES MIGHT THUS, IN THE FUTURE, BE OF INTEREST TO THIS ISOLATED, INSECURE AND ECONOMICALLY BACKWARD COUNTRY.

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